

**PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
MINUTES
GENERAL MEETING
February 15, 2005**

Place: Room 119
Town Hall

TIME: 8:00 PM

PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION MEMBERS ATTENDING:
Damanti, Spain, Kenny, Forman, Conze

STAFF ATTENDING: Ginsberg, Keating

The meeting was called to order at 8:01 p.m. by Mr. Damanti.

GENERAL MEETING

Discussion, deliberation, and possible issuance of a report regarding the following:

Mandatory Referral, Tokeneke Elementary School, 7 Old Farm Road.

Proposal to demolish existing school and construct new school, relocate existing parking, modify existing ball fields, and perform related site development activities. The subject property is located on the southeast corner formed by the intersection of Old Farm Road and Tokeneke Road, and is shown on Assessor's Map #65 as Lot #23, in the R-1 Zone.

Mr. Damanti noted that Section 8-24 of the Connecticut General Statutes requires a report, and this is not an approval or a permit. He said that all schools are in residential zones in Darien, and traffic patterns are much different. Neighborhoods have a right to know what they are likely to expect regarding changes to the school. The Commission noted that it would be beneficial for the Commission and the Town in general to have projections for capital improvements.

Mr. Kenny explained that the traffic at the Middle School now causes delays for northbound traffic on Hollow Tree Ridge Road. It would have been very good to know about that project years ago. Ms. Forman said that the Commission needs to deal with varying circumstances, and some things are not known too far in advance.

Mr. Kenny added that legitimate concerns that come up later on may be set aside in the future due to the positive momentum of the school building project. Mr. Kenny noted that the 1995 Town Plan of Development did not specifically address the need for a replacement Tokeneke School. Commission members acknowledged that there is now a school on that Town-owned property.

The Commission then discussed several changes to the draft report prepared by staff. In particular, comments were received regarding paragraphs 1, 4 and 6, and it was suggested that a new paragraph 9 be included. Mr. Conze then made a motion to adopt the report as amended. That motion was seconded by Ms. Forman. The Commission voted unanimously 5-0 to adopt the report as amended.

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The report read as follows:

**DARIEN PLANNING AND ZONING COMMISSION
C.G.S. SECTION 8-24 MANDATORY REFERRAL REPORT
TOKENEKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL, 7 OLD FARM ROAD
February 15, 2005**

Mandatory Referral, Tokeneke Elementary School, 7 Old Farm Road.

Proposal to demolish existing school and construct new school, relocate existing parking, modify existing ball fields, and perform related site development activities. The subject property is located on the southeast corner formed by the intersection of Old Farm Road and Tokeneke Road, and is shown on Assessor's Map #65 as Lot #23, in the R-1 Zone.

1. On January 25, 2005, the Chairman of the Tokeneke School Building Committee, acting at the direction of the Board of Selectmen, formally submitted a request for a Mandatory Referral report from the Planning and Zoning Commission on the proposal to demolish the existing school and construct a new school, relocate existing parking, modify existing ball fields, and perform related site development activities.
2. This Referral was made under Connecticut General Statutes Section 8-24, which requires that the Commission issue a report within 35 days of the official submittal of the proposal.
3. A public hearing on this matter was held on February 8, 2005. At that hearing, the project was presented to the Planning & Zoning Commission, and the public was provided with an opportunity to ask questions and express their opinions.
4. As specified in the Darien Zoning Regulations, a public school is a permitted use in the R-1 residential zone. In general, Special Permit approval for the use or Site Plan approval from the Commission is not required for a public school. In this case, however, it appears that Planning and Zoning Commission review and approval will be needed for the proposed filling and regrading site work and for activities proposed within the fringe of the flood hazard area. The current proceeding does not encompass an application for such approval, and those issues are not addressed in this report.
5. The Commission has conducted its review and findings on the basis that each member of the Commission voting on this matter is personally acquainted with the subject property and its immediate environs, and is also familiar with the record of the public hearings.
6. This Mandatory Referral covers both the use and re-use of the site. The applicant noted that a number of permits from various land use boards will be necessary to proceed with this project, including, review and approval from the Architectural Review Board, Environmental Protection Commission, and the Planning & Zoning Commission. The Tokeneke School Building Committee expects to proceed with those applications later in 2005.
7. The Commission agrees with the findings of the Building Committee that this property is the proper location in Town for a replacement elementary school and that it is important to keep

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the existing Tokeneke Elementary School functioning while the new replacement school is being built.

8. In the Commission's judgment, based upon the information submitted for the record and the testimony received during the public hearing, the proposed reuse of the property for a replacement Tokeneke Elementary School and the preservation of the existing school while the new building is under construction is acceptable and will be beneficial to the Town. The Commission, having reviewed the proposal, issues this report noting that this project does not conflict with, nor is it inconsistent with Town policies, objectives, and the 1995 Town Plan of Development.
9. The Planning and Zoning Commission acknowledges that all of the schools in Darien exist in residential zones. There is a need to upgrade them as time goes by. The Board of Education needs to be mindful that this Commission and the other Boards of the Town have significant responsibilities which involve long-range planning. It is beneficial that any long-range plans for schools be shared with other interested Boards, such as the Board of Selectmen, the Board of Finance, and the Planning and Zoning Commission.

There being no other business, the meeting was adjourned at 8:30 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Jeremy B. Ginsberg
Planning & Zoning Director

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